

# "33 Ways to Help the Environment"

taken from

□ [www.biodiversity911.org/biodiversity\\_basics/why\\_important/WhyImportant.html](http://www.biodiversity911.org/biodiversity_basics/why_important/WhyImportant.html)

1. Invest in compact fluorescent light bulbs. They use one-fourth of the energy of an incandescent bulb, last at least 10 times longer, and release much less CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere.
2. Plant native trees outside of your home to provide shade and cut air conditioning costs. In some studies, researchers have seen a 20 to 30 percent reduction in electricity consumption for air conditioning when residents planted trees.
3. Paint your home a light color to help reduce home cooling costs and energy consumption. Researchers have found that houses painted white are 5°F cooler than those painted gray, and 4°F to 8°F cooler than those painted black.
4. Keeping your car tuned up so that it's fuel-efficient will save you in fuel costs. A well-tuned car will also pollute less. The simple step of keeping tires properly inflated can reduce gasoline consumption by 5 percent.
5. When buying a new car, go fuel-efficient. If you switched from a car with average gas mileage to a large sport utility vehicle (SUV), you'd consume as much additional energy in one year as you would if you left your refrigerator door open for six years!
6. If you're buying a new car, consider a hybrid electric car. Hybrids get excellent gas mileage (some can travel up to 700 miles on a single tank of gas) because an electric motor helps share the work with a gasoline-powered motor. But unlike electric vehicles, these cars don't need to be plugged in.
7. Avoid planting invasive plants around your house. Encourage your parents to raise native plants.
8. If possible, ride a bike or walk to school or encourage your parents to carpool. Every year, the average car pumps its own weight in CO<sub>2</sub>—a gas that contributes to global climate change—into the atmosphere. But the only CO<sub>2</sub> that bikers and walkers emit is from their own breath!
9. If your community provides mass transportation like buses, use it. Sharing rides on buses and trains helps cut down on emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from cars.
10. Insulate your hot-water heater to cut down on energy use around your home: \$3 to \$4 worth of insulation could save \$20 a year in energy costs and help cut down on greenhouse gas emissions.
11. Turn down the temperature setting on your hot water heater and save one percent on your energy bill for every degree you turn it down. Most manufacturers set the thermostat at 140°F, which is hotter than you need it. By turning it down, you'll save money and help the climate. But don't set your thermostat below 120°F because harmful organisms can grow in a tank kept below this temperature.
12. Shorten your showers to help save energy. Not only will you be saving water, but also you'll be saving energy by giving your water heater less water to heat.
13. Help your refrigerator run at optimum efficiency by using a vacuum cleaner or brush to clean the condenser coils on the back or bottom at least once a year.
14. Turn off the lights and other electric appliances when you're not using them. You not only will save money, but also will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Electricity is often generated by burning coal, which produces gases that contribute to global climate change.
15. If you find anything like oil or sewage leaking into a stream or the ocean, report it to your local department of natural resources or department of environmental protection.
16. Organize a group of students or co-workers to help clean up a waterway or beach near your school or workplace. Streams and beaches can get polluted with litter. Regular cleanup efforts can improve habitats for fish and other aquatic life.
17. When you go fishing, never throw used fishing line in the water. Birds and other aquatic animals can get tangled in it and can even die. If you see old line or other litter in the water, pull it out and dispose of it properly.
18. Clean up after your pets when you take them for walks. The nutrients and pathogens that are found in pet waste can contaminate streams, rivers, or estuaries when it washes down storm drains.

19. Stop junk mail from arriving at your home. If 1 million people did this, they could save 1.5 million trees and a lot of energy. Write to Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008. Or visit <[www.the-dma.org/consumers](http://www.the-dma.org/consumers)> or <[stopjunk.com](http://stopjunk.com)>.
20. Instead of buying a new table or dresser, shop around at used furniture outlets, yard sales, and antique stores. Not only will you save money—and maybe even find a real steal—but you'll also save trees and wood.
21. Plant and nurture native trees in your community and around your school. Trees not only produce oxygen but also guard against global warming by absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>. They even lower our air conditioning needs by shading our homes and offices. The National Arbor Foundation <[www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)>, the National Tree Trust <[www.nationaltreetrust.org](http://www.nationaltreetrust.org)>, and TreeLink <[www.treelink.org](http://www.treelink.org)> can provide information and resources and can help you find others in your community with similar interests.
22. At your dinner table, use cloth napkins rather than disposable paper ones. Paper accounts for the largest percentage of solid waste at landfills. By reusing cloth napkins, you can help cut down on solid waste and help protect forests.
23. When shopping, choose products in limited packaging, such as buying pasta and cereal in bags rather than boxes. This will not only help cut down on the amount of waste in landfills, but will also help reduce our need to harvest trees for paper packaging.
24. Look for ways to reduce your paper use. Try using both sides of every sheet of paper, cutting paper into smaller squares for memo paper, reusing envelopes, and other paper-saving techniques. On average, each American uses 730 pounds of paper per year. That's seven times as much as the world average. Every year, Americans throw away enough office and writing paper to build a 12-foot-high wall stretching from Los Angeles to New York City.
25. Donate used books and magazines to hospitals, retirement homes, women's shelters, or libraries. The donations not only will help these organizations, but also will reduce the resources used to produce paper. Paper accounts for the largest percentage of the volume at solid waste landfills.
26. Consider taking a family vacation that will help biodiversity. Earthwatch <[www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org)> is an organization that allows citizens to assist with scientific research, and the group's Web site details a range of research expeditions that explore the biodiversity of the planet. You could spend your next vacation working with scientists studying anything from ospreys to orangutans.
27. Leave grass cuttings on the lawn. Cuttings serve as a moisture-retentive mulch and a natural fertilizer, and recycling them will reduce the load in landfills.
28. Prevent soil erosion in your yard by raking your leaves rather than using a leaf blower. Not only do leaf blowers contribute to noise pollution and waste fossil fuels, but also they degrade topsoil. Instead, try raking the leaves yourself. It will improve your health and that of your soil, too!
29. Set up a compost pile in your yard so you can enrich your soil with the organic waste from your kitchen rather than use up landfill space. While kitchen scraps, leaves, and grass clippings make excellent compost, they also make up about 25 percent of the waste in landfills and incinerators.
30. Set up a compost pile to help your school or workplace enrich its soil and cut down on the amount of waste it sends to the landfill. Set up buckets in your lunchroom or office where fruit and vegetable waste can be put, empty the buckets daily onto a compost pile, and use the rich compost to enrich your soil around the school or office building. Search online under "compost" for tips on composting.
31. Buy organically grown produce to help reduce the amount of toxic pesticides that harm soil organisms. Pesticides not only kill pests, but also often kill beneficial soil organisms that help keep soil healthy. Look for organically grown produce in your grocery store, or try growing some yourself if you have the space.
32. Avoid the use of toxic drain cleaners. Prevent clogged drains by straining food particles and hair, collecting grease in separate containers, and pouring boiling water or baking soda and vinegar down the drain. To open clogged drains, use a plunger instead of toxic chemical products. Or pour one cup of salt and one cup of baking soda down the drain, followed by six cups of boiling water, and let sit overnight.
33. Find a hazardous waste disposal site near you. The average American home contains 25 gallons of hazardous chemicals that must be disposed of properly when no longer needed. The American Petroleum Institute's Web site at <[www.recycleoil.org](http://www.recycleoil.org)> can help you find the nearest disposal site for household hazardous wastes such as paints, cleaners, oils, and pesticides.